

THE
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.

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VOL. I.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF CHRISTIANS TO LOVE
ONE ANOTHER.

A TRUE christian, is one who cordially and practically acknowledges the Lord Jesus as *his* Lord and Master.

Without cordial obedience, the most correct opinions, and the most solemn professions will entitle us to nothing better than a name to live, while we are dead. Could we speak with the tongues of men or even of angels, if we have not charity, or christian love, we are no better than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Such is the nature of that love, without which we are nothing; and the *want* of which can never be supplied by the greatest share of mental endowments, or the highest claims to orthodox opinions. On the contrary, if we possess this love, no defect of

knowledge, no error of sentiment, can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." As *without* love we are nothing, so *with it*, all things are ours, for "we are Christ's and Christ is God's."

In his affectionate discourse to his disciples, the evening before his crucifixion, our Saviour, in the most particular and impressive manner, urged his disciples to "love one another." We may conceive, that it was indeed of special importance, that the apostles should love one another. Their success, as the apostles of Christ, greatly depended on this. It was highly important, also, as it respected their own comfort in this world, and their happiness in the world to come. The same love, one to another, is important for all the ministers of the gospel, and for all the professed friends of Christ, in every age of the world. We may, therefore, attend to the language of Christ to his disciples, with application to ourselves.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall

ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."—"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."—"These things I command you, that ye love one another."—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Such were the dying counsels and commands of our Saviour to his disciples. May we not hence safely infer, that love, one to another, is of vast importance to his followers? As we cannot, at this time, illustrate all we have quoted, let us fix our attention on one particular:—"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

It behoves us here to observe, that love one to another is not merely recommended, as a matter of prudence, but solemnly commanded, as an indispensable duty. Not only so, the love of Christ to his disciples is made the standard of their love to each other—that ye love one another, as I have loved you.

The love of Christ to his disciples was sincere, impartial, tender, faithful, fervent, forbearing, and forgiving. Such should be the love of christians one to another. All these qualities of the love of Christ are worthy of illustration. One of them, howev-

er, will at this time be more particularly considered:—His love to his disciples was of a *forbearing* nature.

Had there been no imperfection in them, there would have been no opportunity for him to display towards them the spirit of forbearance. But they were imperfect creatures, they were bewildered by their prejudices and entertained some very erroneous opinions. By misinterpreting the prophecies, and probably by traditions received from their fathers, the Jews expected, that their Messiah would be a glorious temporal Prince; that he would literally sit on the throne of David, and reign as king of the Jews; that he would deliver them from their subjection to the Romans, and exalt the nation to independence, happiness, and glory. During the time of our Saviour's ministry, such were the expectations, both of the *believing* and the *unbelieving* Jews. It does not appear, that the believing and unbelieving Jews were divided in sentiment respecting the *object* of the Messiah's mission, or the nature of his kingdom; but they were divided on the question, whether Jesus were the promised Messiah. The apostles themselves appear to have entertained the same opinions respecting the object of the coming of the Messiah, which were entertained by the Jews in general, until sometime after the resurrection of their Lord from the dead. Under the influence of these errors, they "disputed among themselves, which should be the greatest;" that is, which should be prime minister of state,

under the reign of the Messiah. With the same false opinions the mother of Zebedee's children requested of Jesus, that one of her sons might sit on his right hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom. In this request James and John concurred. With the same views the two disciples, on their way to Emmaus, after the resurrection, said to Jesus, not knowing who he was, "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel." In his last interview with his disciples after his resurrection, they put this question—"Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Their hopes, that he would deliver the Jews from the power of the Romans, were confounded, or suspended, by the event of his death; but they were revived on seeing him alive after his resurrection. Hence they were led to interrogate—"Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

Such were the *errors* of the apostles; and thus did they *continue* in error under the ministry of the Son of God. They believed in him as God's Prophet, as God's Ambassador, as God's Messiah, as God's Son; as such they loved him, honored him, trusted in him, hearkened to his instructions, and obeyed his commands. This love, faith, and obedience, secured to them the character of disciples, notwithstanding the enormous errors they entertained: Errors so great, that if any professed christians should advance them, at this day, their sentiments would probably be denominated "*damnable heresies*," and the persons professing

them, would be treated as infidels. However sincere they might be in their profession, however pious, benevolent, and exemplary in their walk, yea, however much they might display the meek and lowly temper of Jesus, they would be rejected, we fear, by multitudes, as the enemies of Christ.

Yet such, in fact, were the *errors* of the apostles of Jesus, until the very moment he was taken up into heaven, "and a cloud received him out of their sight." Nor was he unacquainted with their erroneous opinions. How then did he treat these disciples, while they were so blinded by their prepossessions, and in such a degree under the dominion of error? Did he cast them off, exclude them from his fellowship, and brand them with infamy? Or did he exercise towards them a sincere, tender, and forbearing love? Let his evangelists answer these questions.

One of them relates that on a certain time Jesus asked his disciples—"What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace; for by the way they had disputed, which should be the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve, and said to them—If any man desire to be first, the same shall be servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: And when he had taken him into his arms, he said unto them—whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name receiveth me; and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." Thus with a

mixture of kindness and faithfulness, he instructed them to be humble, and reproved them for their ambition.

On another occasion James and John presented their request, that they might have the two highest offices, in his power to bestow. The words after "but" — *it shall be given to them*, in the common translation, are not in the original; and they change the sense of the passage. Christ did not deny his having a right to give these places to those for whom they were prepared by his Father. "Jesus said unto them, ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said unto him, we are able. And he said unto them, ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but for whom it is prepared of my Father." The other disciples, on hearing this request, "were moved with indignation against the two brethren." This indignation of the ten probably arose from something in themselves of the very ambition which had been manifested by James and John in presenting their request. A contention was thus likely to arise among the disciples from unjustifiable desires of preferment, and from mistakes about the nature of Christ's kingdom. Our Saviour then interposed, "called them to him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that

are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Thus, again, he taught them to be humble, and to suppress all desires of *dominion* one over another. These admonitory instructions, probably, put an end for that time to the dispute between his disciples; and we should suppose, that he very clearly distinguished between the nature of his kingdom, and the kingdoms of this world; but it does not appear, that his disciples fully apprehended his meaning, or gave up their expectations of a secular kingdom. Yet Jesus continued his fellowship with them, as his friends and disciples; and continued to instruct and to employ them. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end of his ministry. The very evening before his death, he ate the passover with them as his disciples, instituted for their observance the memorial of his death, and condescended to wash their feet, as an example of the humility and kindness which they were to exercise one towards another. At the same time, he said unto them, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto

you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither is he that is sent, greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

After this, he discoursed with them in the most tender manner, and endeavoured to comfort and fortify their minds respecting the approaching events. He assured them of the expediency of his going away, gave them the promise of "the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit," and enjoined it on them to show their friendship to him by obedience to his commands, and by love one to another.

Having finished his discourse, he "lifted up his eyes to heaven," and in the most fervent manner prayed for them, that they might be "ONE, even as he and the Father are one." At the same time he prayed, that such might be the case with all who should believe on him through the instrumentality of their preaching.

We should remember, that during all the time of this display of love and fellowship, on the part of Christ towards his apostles, they entertained gross errors in sentiment; for, after this, they manifested, that they had not been cured of their prejudices in favor of a temporal kingdom.

In our common translation, there is something which has the appearance of bitterness in the answer of Jesus to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, after they had said—"We trusted, that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel." Jesus is represented as replying, "O fools and slow of heart, &c."

I shall, therefore, give his answer according to the translation of Dr. Campbell. Then he said to them, "O thoughtless men, and backward to believe things, which have all been predicted by the prophets! Ought not the Messiah thus to suffer, and so to enter into his glory? Then beginning with Moses, and proceeding through all the prophets, he explained to them all the passages relating to himself."

His answer implied *reproof*; but such language, uttered with that affectionate temper, which characterized our Saviour's reproofs, was not calculated to offend any person of a humble mind. While he faithfully reproofed, he gave them the kindest instructions, "opened to them the Scriptures" in a manner calculated to convince them of error, and to remove their unbelief.

Just before his ascension, when his disciples were together, "they asked him, saying, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel." At this time, also, his reply implied *reproof*; and likewise a gracious promise for their encouragement. "He said unto them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power; but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses for me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."

Thus ended the interviews be-

tween Jesus and his apostles. For wise reasons, no doubt, he left them in error on some points of great importance. One reason might be this, that in his conduct towards them, we might have a more striking example of that *forbearing love*, which we are bound to exercise one towards another.

From the brief history we have had of the forbearing nature of Christ's love to his erring disciples, we may, in some measure, discover the force and extent of his command, "that ye love one another, as I have loved you." That we may love one another as he loved his disciples, our love must not be confined to those, who agree with us in opinion. When our love is thus circumscribed, what is it better than *party affection*? Where is the resemblance between our love and the love of Christ? And what is such love better than that love of "publicans and sinners," which Christ condemned.

Had there been no diversity of opinion between Christ and his disciples, how much less striking would have been the evidence of his love to them! We may here see, that by the diversity of opinion among the professed friends of Christ, they all have opportunity for the *trial* of their love; to see whether they love one another, as Christ loved his disciples. If our love be not of a nature to bear this *test*, on what ground can we hope for the approbation of our Lord and Judge? Will he accept of our hatred, or bitterness, towards one another, as equivalent to the love which he has required? May we expect

his approbation of such bitterness because it appears under the pretext of love to him? If his love to himself and to his Father did not lead him to exclude from his fellowship his erring disciples, how can we imagine that *true love* to him will lead us to treat our erring brethren in a manner directly contrary to his example? Let it now be supposed, that during the ministry of Christ, some of his apostles had made greater proficiency than others; that some of them had been cured of their prepossessions in respect to the object of the Messiah's mission, and the nature of his kingdom; and that others still retained those erroneous opinions: Let it also be supposed, that Christ continued his fellowship with both classes, the strong and the weak; but, that the disciples themselves, on account of their different opinions, fell out by the way, and one part excluded the other from fellowship, and treated them as unworthy of the name of disciples. What a contrast would *their* conduct have been to the forbearing example of their Lord and Master?

If the command of Christ, which has been more particularly considered, be as binding on professors, at this day, as it was on the apostles, to whom it was addressed; and if love one to another be still a criterion, by which the real disciples of Jesus are to be distinguished and known; it is surely a question of the most serious moment to all professors of the present time, whether it does appear to the world, that they are the real disciples of Jesus. To be consistent with ourselves

in urging the spirit of forbearance, we shall forbear to apply this subject to any particular sects of Christians. We have no doubt that great deficiency is to be found in every sect, in relation to the duty we have endeavoured to enforce. It is not our wish to wound the feelings of any, by making uncharitable distinctions. The reproofs of our Lord were all tempered with love. Such should be the case with all the reproofs of his disciples one to another. The censure implied in the illustration of the subject before us, we hope to regard, so far as it may be ap-

plicable to ourselves; and we pray, that such may be the case with each of our readers. To all of them, who may attend impartially to the subject, we think it will be evident, that there has been a lamentable deficiency among the professed disciples of Jesus; and, that a thorough reformation, in this particular, would give a new aspect to christianity in our land, and greatly conduce to the happiness of individuals, to the peace of society, to the general welfare of Zion, to the honor of our Saviour, and to the glory of God, the Father.

EXTRACT FROM THE LIFE OF DR. DODDRIDGE.

[The attention of our readers is respectfully called to an extract from the life of Dr. Doddridge by Orton. We shall be gratified, if this extract shall lead any to peruse the whole of that interesting work. The character of Dr. Doddridge was one of the happiest exemplifications of the spirit of Christianity. His piety was zealous, fervent, active, unwearied in labor for the honor of God and the salvation of mankind. But his zeal had no violence, no asperity. It was tempered by the gentlest and kindest feelings. The following extract will show the temper, which he maintained towards those, who differed from him in opinion. May we imbibe his peaceful and heavenly spirit.]

“DR. DODDRIDGE had diligently studied the gospel, and had just ideas of the extent and importance of christian liberty. He had impartially examined the controversy between the established church of England, and the Protestant dissenters,

and thought it his duty to adhere to the latter.”

“But his generous heart never confined truth and goodness to one particular sect, nor in any other respect appeared bigotted to that, or uncharitable to those, who differed from him.”

“He behaved with the utmost candor to the members of the established church. ‘I would be far,’ saith he, ‘from confining all true religion to the members of our own congregations. I am very well aware, that there are a multitude of excellent persons in the establishment, both among the clergy and laity, who, in their different stations, are burning and shining lights; such as reflect a glory on the human nature and the christian profession.’ He always spoke of the established religion of our country with respect. In explaining those texts of scripture in his Family

Expositor, in which he could not avoid showing his sentiments in some points of discipline, different from those which generally prevail, he conscientiously abstained from all reproaches; 'to which indeed,' saith he, 'I am on no occasion inclined, and which I should esteem peculiarly indecent, where the religious establishment of my country is in question; and above all, where a body of men would be affected, many of whom have been, and are, among the ablest advocates and brightest ornaments of christianity. I have been also careful to adjust my Expressions with as much tenderness and respect, as integrity and that reverence, which an honest man would owe to the judgment of his own conscience, were it more singular than mine, would admit.'—He never made any petulant objections against the worship or discipline of the church of England, nor uttered any severe or unkind reflections upon it. Indeed he very seldom mentioned the grounds of the difference between it and the dissenters in the pulpit; and when his subject naturally led him to it, he took occasion to show, how small the things in debate were, compared with those important principles and truths, in which they agreed.—He always spoke in the most respectful terms of the worthy clergy of the established church; thought himself happy in the intimate friendship of some of them, and kept up a friendly correspondence with others, even with some of the highest rank in it. Upon the same principles, he rejoiced, when he had oppor-

tunity, as he sometimes had, of serving any of them in their secular or ministerial interests.—He deeply lamented, that a separation from the communion of that church was, in his apprehension and that of many other good men, made so necessary. He heartily wished and prayed for a greater union among protestants; and longed for the happy time, when, to use his own words, 'the question would be, not how much may we lawfully impose, and how much may we lawfully dispute? but on the one side, what may we wave, and on the other, what may we acquiesce in, from a principle of mutual tenderness and respect, without displeasing our common Lord, and injuring that great cause of original christianity, which he hath appointed us to guard.' Having mentioned to one of his friends a candid letter he had received from a bishop, he adds—'O that God would open a way to a stricter union among protestants of every denomination! But the darkness of our minds, the narrowness of our hearts, and our attachment to private interest make it, I fear in a great measure, impracticable.'—'I greatly rejoice,' saith he on another occasion, 'when I see in those, whom, upon other accounts, I most highly esteem, as the excellent of the earth, that their prejudices against their brethren of any denomination are subdued, as mine against the writers of the establishment early were, and that we are coming nearer to the harmony, in which I hope we shall ever be one in Christ Jesus.'

“He illustrates and confirms his thoughts and hopes on this head, by the words of a familiar letter he had received, from a worthy member of the church of England, well known in the learned world. ‘I am glad,’ saith his correspondent, ‘that christianity begins so well to be understood and taught by so many men of parts and learning in all sects; the fruits of which appear in a candor and charity, unknown to all ages of the church, except the primitive, I had almost said, the apostolic age. Doth not this give you a prospect, though perhaps still very distant, of the completion of the famous prophecy, that speaks of the lion and lamb lying down together in the kingdom of the Messiah? Lions there have been in all churches; but too many fierce, greedy, and blood thirsty lions, though often disguised like lambs; and some lambs there have been, simple enough to think it expedient for the flock to assume the habit and terror of lions. But I hope they now begin to undeceive themselves, and to consider christianity, as intended to bring back the world to that state of innocence, which it enjoyed before the fall. To attain this happy state, all christians should unite their amiable endeavours: and instead of looking out for, and insisting upon points of difference and distinction, seek for those only, in which they do or may agree. They may at least sow the seeds of peace and unity, though they should not live to reap the fruit of it in this world. Blessed are the peace-makers,

saith the prince of peace, for they shall be called the children of God: an appellation infinitely more honourable than that of Pastor, Bishop, Archbishop, Patriarch, Cardinal, or Pope; and attended with a recompense infinitely surpassing the richest revenues of the highest ecclesiastical dignities.’ ‘I join,’ adds the Doctor, ‘my hearty wish and prayer, with those of my much esteemed friend, that we all more and more deserve this character, and attain its reward.’ I am persuaded, that nothing ever appeared, in his lectures, correspondence, or private discourse, inconsistent with these sentiments, which he hath publicly avowed; especially in his Sermon on christian candor and unanimity. He labored to promote a like candid and friendly spirit in his pupils. He exhorted them to treat their brethren of the establishment with respect; never to utter any invectives against the constitution or forms of the Church of England; and if Providence should fix them near humble, peaceable, pious clergymen, to honor and love them, to cultivate a friendship with them, to study to serve them and promote their reputation and interest. These were the advices of the Lecture room: and I have the pleasure to know, that those of his pupils, with whom I am acquainted, have acted upon these catholic instructions, and been remarkable for their candor and moderation, in consequence of the pains he took, by his instructions and example, to instil these virtues into them, and his laying before

them the arguments on both sides of contested questions.

“Whoever considers how numerous the protestant dissenters in this kingdom are; that they claim a liberty of choosing their own ministers, of judging for themselves of the sense of scripture, and what rites and modes of worship that enjoins; and where there is no particular rule, of determining for themselves what is most subservient to christian edification; whoever considers this, will not wonder that there have been, and are, different sentiments among them; that they are ranged under different denominations, and that there are sometimes divisions and contentions among them. These Dr. Doddridge saw and lamented; and was as careful, as he could be, consistently with keeping a good conscience, to be upon friendly terms with them all, to shew a candid temper to those of a different persuasion, and promote the like in them. ‘He was very little inclined to contend about technical phrases of human invention, which have, with equal frailty, been idolized by some and anathematized by others.’ A rigid spirit, and a stiffness about indifferent things, he very much disliked, especially when attended with uncharitableness. He thought ‘there was always reason to suspect those persons and principles, that would alienate our hearts from any of the faithful servants of Christ, because they do not agree with our sentiments about the circumstantialia of religion; and that Christians had great need to be cautious, lest they abuse their

liberty to gratify those irregular passions, which, to whatever high original they may pretend, were indeed to be traced no higher than a carnal principle, and to be numbered among the works of the flesh.’ It grieved him to see impositions upon conscience any where; especially among dissenters, as they were so evidently contrary to their own principles. ‘Our interest,’ saith he, ‘hath received great damage by unscriptural impositions and uncharitable contentions with each other.’ It appears from what was said above of his behaviour to his pupils, that he thought it unjust in itself, and very injurious to the interests of religion, to be rigorous with young ministers and students about their particular sentiments, and to tie them down to profess their assent to formularies, containing points of a very abstruse or a very doubtful nature: He thought it also foolish in the imposers, as being likely to prejudice them against those points, and drive them into the opposite, and perhaps worse, extreme. When therefore the Author of *Christianity not founded on argument* had derived this practice, he left others to defend it, who were chargeable with it, or approved it. It was an inviolable maxim with him, ‘never to condemn his brethren as having forfeited all title to the name of Christians, because their creeds or confessions of faith did not come up to the standard of his own; yea, he thought that if it were a matter that seemed of so great importance, as to give some reason to suspect, that the mistake was

fatal (which surely nothing can be, which does not greatly affect men's tempers towards God and each other), even that consideration should engage us to

gentleness and tenderness, rather than severity, if peradventure we may remove their prejudices.

To the Editors of the Christian Disciple.

GENTLEMEN,

EVERY periodical publication, with which I have been acquainted, has been fair in promise. Yours, I hope, will be among the very few, which have not disappointed expectation.

Permit me to observe, that I am much pleased with the title which you have chosen. If I understand your object in the selection of this name, and if this object should be accomplished, it will give a charm to your book, which, if it do not increase the number of its readers, will be most salutary upon the hearts of all who shall resort to it for instruction. I suppose the name to be designed to indicate *the spirit* of the book, to which it invites our notice; the intention of its editors to give to their readers a work, in reading which they will feel the same emotions, the same affections, which would be excited and exercised by familiar intercourse with a disciple, whose dispositions, affections, and objects were all modeled by the instructions and the example of our benevolent and holy Master. You intend, I hope, to shew us what a "christian disciple" should be; to exhibit and to inculcate at once the principles and the temper which was in Christ. You have my hearty prayers, that God may speed so good a purpose; and if you do

not lose sight of it, I am confident that he will not withhold his blessing.

I need not suggest to you, Gentlemen, that much knowledge of the scriptures may be possessed by men, who appear to be scarcely less strangers to the spirit of our religion, than if it had not inculcated meekness, and candor, and forbearance, and love. Much, I am sorry to believe, is also possessed by some, of whom I hope that it is not uncandid to say, that their want of *seriousness* is not only a very great defect in their own characters, but perhaps one of the most important causes, why their endeavours to extend christian knowledge have so little influence. While therefore I look to the pages of the *Christian Disciple* for valuable information; while I anticipate in it a book to which I may direct those who inquire of me, where they may find, in the cheapest form and the shortest compass, the knowledge which they would obtain concerning the different books, and the doctrines of the scriptures; I am particularly desirous of seeing in it an *exemplification* of that *seriousness*, which is certainly a constituent part of a christian character, and of that *charity*, which "vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, and thinketh no

evil." Knowledge, conveyed with this spirit, will descend from the head into the heart, where it will gradually obtain authority over the will and passions, and bring them into subjection to the principles of christian piety and virtue. It is the want of this spirit, I believe, more than any other external cause, which has made so many books, otherwise most valuable, to be of so little efficacy.

We are accustomed to use the word *seriousness*, as we do many others, with a latitude of meaning, which renders its definition of some importance, when we employ it with such an emphasis, and attribute the prevention of so much good to the want of it; and some will think perhaps, that even in the service of religion, it has been so often misunderstood by some, and used only as a cloak of hypocrisy by others, that on these accounts also it is not less necessary, that its objects and operations should be clearly marked, and its limitations prescribed. Indulge me then for a moment, while I attempt to express my sentiments more fully upon the subject.

By seriousness, I certainly do not mean either the gloom of despondence, or merely a solemnity of countenance and of manners, assumed as occasion requires, and employed only to obtain a reputation of more than ordinary piety and virtue. But I mean that feeling, or *that disposition of the mind, which is produced by a deep sense of the importance and obligations of religious truth, and which is nourished and supported by a faithful*

application of principles to our own practice. Equally remote from levity, which implies either thoughtlessness, or indifference; from artifice, which would be thought to be undisguised, even while it most cautiously seeks concealment; and from melancholy, which is induced by erroneous views of religion, or by dwelling with too much intense-ness on some of its subjects, to the exclusion of others; seriousness is a disposition of the mind, at once considerate, and tranquil; unostentatious, but sincere; consistent with every innocent enjoyment, but averse from every indulgence, the pleasure of which would be interrupted by a remembrance of accountability. Or it may be considered as that *preparation* of the mind for the contemplation, or the discussion of religious truth, and the performance of its duties, which becomes a creature, living constantly under the eye of God, accountable to him, and destined to immortality. It will indeed affect the manners of men, and their modes of conversation; but it will neither give a stiff and formal air to address, nor a dull, and cold, and repulsive character to their sentiments, or their expressions. It neither partakes of depression, nor is adapted to excite it. It has none of the uncharitableness of bigotry, or of the untempered zeal of fanaticism.

Every man must and will be serious, who deliberately considers, that the rules of religion and virtue are the principles, by which he will be judged, and his eternal condition decided. But the momentary disposition which

most men occasionally feel, to a more than usual thoughtfulness upon religious subjects, is very far short of the seriousness which religion demands. To be worthy of a place among the qualities of a christian character, it must be a habit of the mind. This sense of the importance of religion will make us equally inquisitive to know the truth, and cautious to escape error; equally attached to sentiments obtained by gradual and progressive conviction, and candid in judging the sentiments of others. It will make us earnest in the pursuit of every object, in proportion to the relation which it bears to our own, and to the religious and moral good of others; and as it is induced by practical views of religion, so it is adapted, in turn, to secure the practical influence of every principle which it embraces. This is the disposition which I wish that you could assist me to exercise; and the excitement of which in others, I deem of far more importance, than the discussion of disputed texts, or the most ingenious defences of any contested doctrines.

So far as my own information extends, there is a great want of this seriousness in many of the professors, in every denomination of christianity; and the charge, though I think very unjustly, has been made particularly against those, who are called "liberal christians." If the want of seriousness be particularly applicable to liberal christians, the cause is to be sought elsewhere, than in a want of principles which are adapted to make men serious. The doctrines of the

moral government of God, and of human accountability, applied as rules of life, will alone produce a far deeper reverence of God, and a far more solemn consideration of our conduct, than it has been my happiness to witness, at least in many, even of those in whom no one would complain of a deficiency of faith. But I feel far less solicitude to attempt a vindication against this charge, than I have to see men affected, as they should be, by sentiments which they profess to receive, as instructions from God, and rules by which they expect to be judged. That christianity has little influence, compared with what it should have, upon the tempers and lives of men—that there is great coldness and indifference upon the greatest subjects which can engage human attention, is a truth which all who reflect will acknowledge, and all who think seriously will deplore. Most earnestly do I hope that the Christian Disciple will be a favored instrument of "rousing professors from their slumbers; of breathing into them a spirit of mild, but earnest devotion; of opening at once their understandings and their hearts to the excellence, the goodness, and the authority of God, and of the love of Jesus Christ, who shed his blood for their redemption."

The importance of a charitable and conciliating spirit to the union, order, and happiness of our churches, and to the advancement of religion in the hearts of men, is comparatively unfelt in places like our metropolis, where every man, without inconvenience, may choose his place of

worship, and find a large number, with whom he may associate, who think almost precisely like himself. But in the country, and especially in towns not large enough for division into two or three societies, without exposure to all the dangers of anarchy and contention, a bigoted and uncharitable mind in a few individuals, produces the most unhappy consequences. Here then is likewise a wide sphere for your exertions. You may not be able, in many instances, by courses of argument, to correct erroneous sentiments. But you will do much, very much for the cause of the gospel, by inculcating and exhibiting the temper, with which christians, who differ in opinion, should converse on the subjects of their differences; by marking out that common ground, on which they may meet with the purest love, and unite in the worship of God. The differences of christians in common life

are much less in number, and when they can be brought to mutual and friendly explanations, of much less importance, than are those which divide men who are fond of speculation, and whose object it is to build their own, upon the destruction of the systems of others. Shew them their differences and their points of union, without exciting at the same time the party spirit which they are too much accustomed to indulge, and I am persuaded that your efforts, if they sometimes fail, will often be rewarded with success.

I shall wait, Gentlemen, with some impatience, for your work. If its spirit accord with my anticipations, and with its promises, I shall hail it as a harbinger of great good. From my heart, I wish grace, mercy, and peace to all men; and for myself, I wish nothing greater in this world, than to be indeed and in truth a Christian Disciple.

EXTRACT FROM DR. PRICE'S DISSERTATION ON PRAYER.

The following extract from Dr. Price's excellent dissertation on prayer is offered to our readers, not only on account of its intrinsic merit, but as it is a valuable and unsuspecting testimony to the reality and happiness of a devout character. There are persons, who, when they hear of the pleasure of communion with God, pronounce it at once delusion, or enthusiasm, or hypocrisy—But Dr. Price is too well known to be exposed to these inconsiderate reproaches. He was a man of a vigorous, cultivated, and philosophic mind; composed, and mild, and steady in his feelings; and singularly humble, unostentatious, and sincere in his temper and manners—

He was one of the last men to make a show of piety, to affect a fervor which he did not feel, to boast of a happiness to which he was a stranger. Let the following extract be read, as the language of an upright and enlightened mind—and let us learn from it the elevated piety of which our nature is capable, which is the highest end of our being, and the purest felicity we can attain in this world, or in the world to come.

“I WOULD recommend this duty from the consideration of the pleasures that attend the due discharge of it. Prayer, as has been before observed, is the ex-

ercise of our highest affections on their highest object, and the intercourse of our minds with uncreated and sovereign goodness. It must therefore be the foundation of the highest pleasure. What delight does a virtuous man often feel when he puts himself solemnly into the presence of his Maker, and considers him as one with his soul and as observing every motion within it; when he implores all suitable blessings from him with a lively faith in his readiness to give him more than he can ask or think; when he adores his inconceivable excellencies, and magnifies and blesses that love which gave being to the world; when he commits his whole existence to him with boundless hope, and gives full scope to every pious and grateful affection? What rapture and ravishment attend such exercises, and how high do they lift our souls?—Words are indeed wanting here; nor is it possible properly to describe the pleasure there is in all the acts of devotion; in addressing our desires, with a pure heart to our almighty Parent; in praising him for his innumerable benefits; in beseeching him to cause us to grow in every amiable disposition; in interceding with him for those we love; in feeling benevolence, gratitude and hope kindling within us before his eye; in spreading our wants and perplexities before him, and seeking direction and help from him; in throwing our cares and burdens upon him, and referring ourselves to his disposal, so as not to retain any wish of any thing which he is pleased

to forbid or deny. Even the tears of penitential sorrow and contrition, or of sympathy and benevolence, into which a devout person may sometimes be melted, have a sweetness in them not to be expressed, and are more to be desired than the greatest joys of the irreligious.—Am I, reader, now talking to you a language you do not understand? Have you never felt any of the pleasures I am now speaking of? Do you not know what it is to look up to God in private and to pour out your soul before him?—Unhappy then are you, and a stranger yet to what you ought to be best acquainted with.

It cannot be doubted but that the pleasures I am now speaking of will constitute a principal part of our happiness in every future period of our existence. We can indeed enjoy them but very imperfectly here. Many low cares and desires are continually forcing themselves into our minds, and distracting their attention, and rendering it impossible for us to disengage them enough from sensible objects, and to acquaint ourselves with God in the manner we desire. But hereafter we may hope to get nearer access to him, and obtain clearer views of his glory and majesty. All that now retards the flight of our souls to him, and checks their happiness in him will be removed. Every cloud that now hides him from our sight will vanish, and we shall be able to feel his presence with us in a manner we cannot now conceive. How high then will the pleasures of devotion rise? With what ardor and

transport shall we be able to worship and to praise him, to cast our souls before him, and to delight ourselves in him?—But let it be remembered, that this is a happiness, which will never be enjoyed by any who forget God now. If we allow ourselves in guilt and irreligion, or cultivate no acquaintance with the Deity in this life, we cannot be fit for seeing him and dwelling with him in another life. A course of present devotion, as it will give us some foretastes of the happiness of heaven, is also necessary to inure us to it and prepare us for it.

“I cannot omit observing further, under this head, that devotion is not only, in the *immediate exercise* of it, thus a source of happiness, but also constitutes a general temper, conducive in the highest degree to happiness. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of hope, humility, gratitude, and resignation; and must therefore, as far as we are possessed of it, be productive of an inward satisfaction and tranquillity which are preferable to all sensible delights. A mind thus turned, has many sources of pleasure peculiar to itself. It is elevated above the tumults of this world, and can preserve self-enjoyment in all circumstances, and take up its rest in God in the midst of outward troubles and calamities. —A truly devout temper is indeed the very temper of bliss. It cherishes and strengthens all the tender and agreeable affections, and checks all the turbulent and painful ones. It disposes us to receive pleasure from every object about us, gives new

lustre to the face of nature, renders every agreeable scene and occurrence more agreeable, heightens the relish of every common blessing, and improves and refines all our enjoyments. How blest is that man whose desires are continually directed to heaven; who is always exercising gratitude to the Deity and trust in him; whose heart is kept close with him, and whose thoughts are full of him; who tastes his beneficence in whatever gives him pleasure; who terminates all his views in him, and has learnt to carry his attention from every degree of beauty and good, in created beings, to the inexhaustible fountain of all beauty and good? What peace and serenity must fill a mind, assured that its affairs are under the *best* direction; conscious of its interest in almighty love; and whose regard is habitually fixed on that unsearchable wisdom which conducts all events?

“I will add, that devotion greatly improves the pleasure attending all inquiries into nature, and advances in the knowledge of it. The difference between the pleasure, received by a devout and an indevout mind in observing the universe, is like that between the pleasure, received from the same cause by a man and a brute. It is the consideration of the universe as God's work, and the observation of his power, wisdom, and goodness, displayed in it, that clothe it with its chief beauties, and render it in the highest degree a delightful spectacle. There is no greater incentive to devotion than an attentive consideration of the

glorious order of nature ; nor is there any tendency within us more natural, than that arising from hence to religious adoration. And there is an inexpressible pitifulness in the character of a man who stifles this tendency; who confines his views to *second* causes, and forgets the *first*; who sees not the Deity in

his works; who devotes his time to philosophical researches, but satisfies himself with mere speculation; who can survey the world, enjoy its pleasures, and reflect on its wonderful structure, without lifting up his heart to the Author of it, without being warmed into praise, or feeling any pious and devout emotions."

ON MISTAKES OF THE TERMS OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

THE terms of acceptance with God, or the methods by which the divine favor may be obtained, deserve our most serious regard. The design of this communication is to point out some common mistakes on this most interesting subject.

1. In the first place; it is a very prevalent opinion, that a character good upon the whole, when in the opinion of the world there is more virtue than vice, will at last be accepted by God, though the person is conscious of some favorite sin, which he deliberately and habitually practises, or of the prevailing omission of some duty, which he cannot but know the strictness of christian virtue to require. Such a man's ground of security is this; that although he lives from day to day in the violation of some well known obligation, God will take his character on the whole as it affects society, and striking a balance between his virtues and his vices, receive him at last into favor, or at least screen him from punishment.

It is impossible for me to express in language sufficiently strong, the danger and madness of such a state of mind. St. James

has said, that whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all. His meaning is sufficiently plain; that the observance of one or more obligations can never be an atonement for the habitual or deliberate violation of another of equal authority. This would be in fact to annihilate the very nature of religion, of virtue, of obedience; because the deliberate indulgence of any one sin, or the deliberate omission of any one duty, is such a disrespect for the authority, by which our whole duty is enjoined, as cannot consist with any sincere principle of obedience. In this way might the whole decalogue be successively broken, and yet the offender esteem himself secure, because it is impossible to be at the same time guilty of every offence. If you have for a moment believed, that because you happen to be honest, or temperate, or charitable, or devout. you may live in the deliberate violation of any other law, or in the habitual neglect of any practice, which is as clearly a duty, as honesty, temperance, charity, or devotion, abjure, I beseech you, such terrible presumption ; for it

puts eternal happiness at risk, and as God is true, you cannot in such circumstances be safe.

2. In the second place; another mistake of the terms of acceptance with God is to rely upon faith only for salvation. As this mistake, like many others, is founded on the ground of certain passages of scripture, let us hear what is so often quoted on the subject. "By grace are ye saved through faith;" and "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Does Paul then mean to declare, that a bare belief in Jesus Christ, without repentance and obedience, can secure to any man the gift of eternal salvation? Let his brother James answer, as he has, in terms which nothing can render more explicit. "What does it profit a man, if he say he have faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? No! faith without works is dead, being alone."

If however we will attend to the meaning of Paul in these favorite passages, we shall find no necessity of confronting him with the authority of James. "By grace are ye saved through faith." Observe the expression—ye *are* saved.—Does he mean then that the Ephesians, to whom he was writing, had already entered, or were as safe, as if they had entered, on their everlasting reward? No, surely; for we find from his repeated and earnest exhortations, that they were yet in danger of falling into sin, and of losing all their present hopes, and future prospects. How then were they by grace *already* saved thro' faith? The proper answer

is—the salvation to which their faith had introduced them, and which was the only salvation he intended, was a deliverance from the former ignorance and habits of vice, in which they were sunk, before they were acquainted with christianity. From these they were now saved. By their faith in Christ they had now entered on a new and merciful dispensation; and this salvation was to be ascribed to God's grace, for it was a favor, which they had in no way deserved. Thus were they rescued from a deplorable state, and placed in the way of salvation, in which, if they faithfully continued, and steadily improved, they would lay hold on eternal life. Thus were they "justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;" that is, notwithstanding all which the conceited Jews might tell them about the necessity of circumcision and the law of Moses, they might be assured, that if they were virtuous, and improved their christian advantages, they would enjoy the present and final favor of that God, who is no respecter of persons; without the deeds of that ritual law, to which the Jews wished to reduce them.

3. A third and very similar mistake of the terms of acceptance with God, is found among those who profess to rely on the merits of Christ. It is not uncommon to find men, who have never discovered any sentiments of religion, or given any satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation, using, when they leave the world, this too familiar language. For does not an apostle assure us, say they, that

"now if any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." But for what sins, my christian friends? For those which we have not forsaken, or of which we have not repented? For those sins which we every day commit without remorse, without consideration? Suppose the merits of Christ to be infinite and invaluable? Can they supply our deliberate and sinful omissions of duty? Christ has done nothing, which will ultimately benefit the unrepenting man, nothing which will benefit him, whose presumption on a Saviour's merits is thought sufficient to excuse him from aiming at any virtue of his own.

The application of Christ's righteousness to ourselves is in truth a phrase altogether unscriptural and absurd. The word of God conveys no such meaning as this phrase bears in the mouth of an irreligious man. It is true indeed, that the worth of our Saviour's character is beyond all estimate; and his obedience to death was, in the sight of God, inexpressibly precious; but never can this worth become ours; except so far as we imitate his excellence; and whatever may be the efficacy of his death, never, never let it be imagined that it is a propitiation for the sins which we still retain, the sins which we will not forsake!

Lastly. Are there any of us looking forward to some future day of repentance, as the ground of our security? What do we understand then by repentance?

This sentiment is most alarming, because nothing is more true, than that every resolution to repent at a future time, is necessarily, and in the very nature of it, insincere, because it implies a preference of a man's present habits, to a course of obedience.

But you have seen examples of effectual repentance on a death bed. Effectual, my friends? God only knows how far the last agonizing exercises of the dying can alter the very grain and texture of the soul, or essentially affect the character. Or all the sorrow in the world, this dying sorrow would seem to be the most worthless. It may be, if God so please, not without its effect; but in the apprehension of man, it appears the least worthy of consideration, for it is the exercise of a feeble mind; it is the offering of an affrighted soul, the anguish of a frame already in dissolution; in short it is the resolution of a spirit, which can never prove its sincerity, the prayer of a man who must receive his answer in another world.

But you say, did not the thief on the cross repent just before expiring, and express a faith in Christ, which was accepted.—Repent, my friends? We know nothing of his guilt, or of his character. He was crucified, it is true, as a malefactor; but I know not that he discovers any traces of what is commonly understood by a deathbed repentance. All the dispositions, which he then expressed, are those of a well disposed, patient, meek, and christian sufferer. It is true, that he seems to have then, for the first time, expressed his faith

in Christ, but how know we that he had ever before had an opportunity of seeing or hearing our Saviour? His disposition at this solemn interval authorises us to conclude, that if he had before been acquainted with our Saviour, he would have been one of his followers.

But you say, are there not those who are called at the eleventh hour? what else is the meaning of that parable? We answer, this parable, which originally refers to the introduction of the Gentiles into the church of God, whom the Jews despised because they had been introduced before them, can never be applied to the circumstances of those, who are born within the limits of the christian enclosure. It was at the eleventh hour indeed, that the Gentiles were called; it is still later that the gospel is now made known to many nations of the earth; but, alas, what is that to us, who have had line upon line and precept upon precept; who have been called incessantly from the first hour to the eleventh; and of whom many now see that the day is far spent, and the night is at hand, while yet they have done nothing of that work, for which they were sent into the world.

Reader, whoever you are, delay not a moment to fulfil your christian obligations; waste not life in successive resolutions of amendment. It is not resolutions which God requires—it is amendment itself. And is this life so long, so much within our power, that any of us may say, I will be a christian hereafter? What can authorise us to delay for a mo-

ment a single duty? Is it difficult? Will time then diminish, or will it increase this difficulty? Time surely will not do that for us, which time has already made it so difficult to do. It will not change that habit, which it has already made so difficult to change.

But we fondly hope, that years will wear out our evil inclinations, and impair our predominant passions, whatever they may be. Ah, years may bring with them some new habits more difficult to be corrected or excused, but when, oh when, without our own care and cooperation, did time ever cure the diseases of the mind, or change its vitiated humors?

But suppose that age, at last, should cure those evil affections, which have already by age gained so much strength, yet who can promise us a long life? Or suppose it to be granted us, what ingratitude is this! To give at last to God the remnant of a poor, decaying, useless, insignificant life! To serve him most faithfully when your passions are extinct, and you can serve your sins no longer!—Is this virtue? Is this religion? Was it for this, probationary man was sent into the world;—to relinquish what he can no longer retain! and alter a course, which he can no longer follow! Let us not then talk of abandoning our sins. At this period, it is sin which abandons us.

What then shall we say to these things? Shall not all that has now been urged to shew the unreasonableness of hopes, built on any of the pretences, which we have now suggested, separat-

ed from a life of righteousness and true goodness; shall it not determine us to lay hold of the present opportunity, and to work out our salvation, while the day

lasts, because the night cometh—the night of sickness, or the night of death—when no man can work.

Illustrations of passages in the New Testament, which refer to climate, places, offices, sentiments, manners, and customs, among the Jews, in the time of our Saviour.

6.

Luke ii. 25. "There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel."

Waiting for the consolation of Israel—That is, expecting the Messiah. The expression is derived from a custom of the Jews, of reading the 40th chapter of Isaiah on the sabbath after the fast, in which they commemorated the burning of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. The chapter begins with the words, *comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God*. Hence the predicted Messiah was called, *the consolation of Israel*; and hence the custom among them, at that time, of swearing by their desire of seeing *the consolation of Israel*. So eager indeed, at that time, were their expectations, that every impostor who promised to accomplish their hopes, was immediately surrounded with followers, who hazarded all which they had, to support him. Of this expectation among the Jews, there are several intimations in the gospels. See John i. 19—24. Luke iii. 15. John xxiii. 50, 51. But of its extent and its influence we shall form more correct conceptions, by recurring to the testimonies of profane historians.

"That which principally encouraged them to the war," says Josephus, "was an ambiguous oracle, found likewise in the sacred writings, that, about that time, some one from their country should obtain the empire of the world." Antiq. B. ix. ch. 2. § 2, and B. vi. ch. 31.

Two heathen historians have likewise mentioned the same thing. Suetonius, in his life of Vespasian, says, "there had been for a long time, all over the East, an opinion firmly believed, that it was in the fates, [in the decrees, or books, of the fates,] that at that time, some from Judea would obtain the empire of the world." Lib. viii. § 4.

After relating many calamities of the Jews, and prodigies, which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, Tacitus says, "the greatest number of them had a strong persuasion, that it was recorded in the ancient writings of the priests, that the East should prevail, and that some, coming from Judea, should possess universal dominion, which ambiguities foretold Vespasian and Titus. But the common people, according to the accustomed course of human passions, having interpreted in their own favor this grand prediction of the fates, could not be reclaimed to the

truth, even by all their adversities." Hist. l. v. c. 13.

Celsus, also, an enemy of christianity, who flourished not long after the middle of the second century, reigning in the character of a Jew, says, "how could we, who had told all men there would come one from God, who should punish the wicked, despise him if he came?"—Without, at present, referring to the preconceived sentiments of the Jews concerning the Messiah, we have endeavoured only to shew the prevalence of the expectation of his coming.

See Beausobre and L'Enfant's Introduction to the New Testament, in Watson's Tracts, p. 222. This is the edition to which I shall refer as an authority. And Lardner's works. vol. i. pp. 132, 133.

7.

Matt. ii. 1. "There came wise men from the east, to Jerusalem."

"Arabia," says Tacitus, "was the bound of Judea eastward;" and the Arabians are sometimes called in the scriptures, the men of the east. Judges vi. 3. Job i. 3.—The Arabians, Idumeans, and Chaldeans, all eastern people in respect of Judea, valued themselves on their wisdom; and the name of Magus, in those countries, signified a philosopher—a man who studied wisdom. There is, however, concerning these Magi, a great but unimportant diversity of opinions. The star, which guided them to Jerusalem, was probably a very extraordinary meteor, which appeared in that direction; and it is not improbable that the report, to which we referred in the pre-

ceding illustration, that a great prince was at this time to arise in Judea, induced them to follow the star. The coincidence of the report, and of this extraordinary light, account satisfactorily for their inquiries in verse second.—"*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." [See Whitby on the verse, and Calmet on the word *magi*.]

8.

Matt. ii. 3. "When Herod the king heard these things, *he was troubled*."

The Pharisees, says Jeseplus, had predicted, that God had decreed to put an end to the government of Herod. This prediction probably originated in their confidence, that the Messiah would soon make his appearance; and this prediction, with the general and well known expectation of the nation, account to us for all the fears, which the evangelist says were felt by Herod. [See Lardner's works, vol. i. p. 281.]

9.

Matth. ii. 5. In "*Bethlehem*, of Judea."

It was a commonly received opinion, that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem, as the scribes told Herod; and Christ being born there, they affected to call him a Galilean, designing, by this means, insensibly to wear out the remembrance of his being born in Bethlehem. [See Beausobre's and L'Enfant's introduction, p. 273.]

10.

Matt. ii. 16. "Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth,

and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time that he had diligently inquired of the wise men."

This destruction of the infants of Bethlehem is not mentioned by Josephus, nor by Greek nor Roman historians. But is it therefore improbable? Josephus has related many things of Herod, which are not even intimated by the evangelists, but which prove him to be capable of any enormity. We subjoin some of the cruelties which he has recorded of Herod, but which are not glanced at in the gospels.

When he had obtained possession of Jerusalem, he persuaded Antony, by a bribe, to put Antigonus, his rival, to death.—Aristobulus, brother of his wife Mariamne, was murdered by his directions, because the people at Jerusalem expressed some affection for his person.—In the seventh year of his reign, he put Hyrcanus to death, the grandfather of his wife, then eighty years of age, and who had saved his life when he was prosecuted by the Sanhedrim.—His wife, the beautiful and virtuous Mariamne, was publicly executed; and soon after, her mother, Alexandra, was also put to death.—Instigated by jealousy, he caused his two sons by Mariamne, Alexander and Aristobulus, to be strangled in prison, after they were married and had children.—And in his last sickness, a little before his death, he sent orders throughout Judea, requiring the presence of all the chief men of the nation at Jerico. His orders were obeyed,

for they were enforced by the penalty of death. When they arrived at Jerico, he caused them to be shut up in the circus; and calling for his sister Salome, and her husband Alexas, he said to them:—"My life is now but short, I know the dispositions of the Jewish people, and nothing will please them more than my death. You have these men in your custody. As soon as the breath is out of my body, and before my death can be known, do you let the soldiers in upon them, with commands to kill them. All Judea, and every family will then, though unwillingly, mourn at my death."—Josephus adds, that, "with tears in his eyes he conjured them, by their love to him, and their fidelity to God, not to fail of doing him this honor."—These bloody orders were not executed;—but was this Herod incapable of commanding the destruction of all the infants of Bethlehem?

Macrobius, a heathen author, who flourished in the latter end of the fourth century, says, that when Augustus heard that among the children within two years of age, which Herod, king of the Jews, commanded to be slain in Syria, his own son had been killed, he said, "it is better to be Herod's hog than his son."—Macrobius has probably mistaken the occasion of the jest, as none of the early christian writers have said, that one of the children of Herod was killed in the slaughter of Bethlehem. But there is no reason to doubt that the jest is genuine; and that the slaughter of the infants in Judea was well known in the time of

Macrobius, and was not contested by the heathens. [See the subject of this number very amply treated in Lardner's works, vol. i. pp. 329—338.]

ON HUMILITY IN THE INVESTIGATION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

IN the last number of the *Christian Disciple*, this subject was proposed for discussion—and to place it in a clear light, we began with considering what this humility does not imply. Our first remark, to which we then confined ourselves, was, that we are not called, by this humility, to resign our understandings to the guidance of others.—The second remark is this:—

2. To search for truth with christian humility does not imply that we renounce our reason, and yield our assent to inconsistent or contradictory propositions. A humility of this kind is sometimes urged. We are told that the human mind cannot penetrate the depths of divine wisdom; that it is pride to bring God's truth to the bar of our reason; that we are to receive the obvious meaning of scripture, however it may contradict our previous conceptions of truth and rectitude; and that our humility is proportioned to the readiness, with which we embrace what shocks our understandings.

Every man must have met with language like this, not very precise, and not altogether erroneous, but yet adapted to produce unhappy effects, to terrify and subdue the spirit of inquiry, and to prepare men for the reception of any absurdity, which is urged

on them, as a revelation from God.

I wish it to be remembered, that in this discussion, I understand by *reason* our intellectual powers, exercised with deliberation, impartiality, and the love of truth. Now it is readily granted, that these powers are feeble, and that human comprehension is narrow, when compared with the wisdom and operations of God. It is readily granted, that the wisest men know little of what may be known, and that a revelation from God may be expected to unfold truths, which have never before entered our minds, and of which nature and providence give us no intimation. But because our faculties and improvements are limited, we ought not to expect that we shall ever be called by our Creator to yield assent to doctrines, which, *after deliberate and impartial attention*, clearly appear to contradict one another, or to contradict the truths, which God is teaching us by reason and by nature. If our rational powers are among the best gifts of God, if they form, in no small degree, the distinction and glory of our nature, and if it is our duty to employ and improve them, can we expect a revelation, which will require us to renounce them, and will introduce into our under-

standings, perplexity, and confusion? Ought we not rather to believe, that our kind Father will ever adapt his instructions to the faculties he has given us?

Let me ask, why is it that a revelation has been made to man, rather than to inferior animals? Is not this the plain answer, that man is a rational being? Is not the possession of reason the very ground, on which this signal benefit is conferred upon our race; and can we suppose then, that revelation contradicts reason, that it calls us to renounce the very faculties which prepare us for its reception?

It is indeed wonderful that any person acquainted with christianity, can imagine that this religion is unfriendly to the exercise of reason. The fact is, reasoning, reflection, inquiry, and the most serious exercise of our intellectual powers, are demanded by christianity; both that we may perceive its truth, and that we may attain to a just apprehension of its doctrines.

Let me ask the intelligent christian, why he believes christianity to be from God? Have you had, my friend, an immediate communication from heaven, which has relieved you from all trouble of inquiring into this subject? Has a sudden beam darted into your mind, or has a loud voice proclaimed, that christianity is divine? No. You have been obliged to examine the proofs of this religion, to inquire into its original, to study its spirit, to trace its influence. In other words, you have been obliged to reason about it, and reason has taught you to receive it as from

God. Thus the great question, *whether christianity be true*, has been entrusted by God, to the decision of human reason. This is a very weighty consideration. This does not look as if reason were to be renounced. Let it be remembered, that christianity appeals to us as rational beings, that it comes to us with proofs, and commands us to weigh them. It asks to be received only upon scrutiny, only because it offers arguments sufficient to convince an unbiassed understanding. Is it then conceivable, that christianity contradicts reason, the very principle to which it thus makes its appeal, to which it addresses the proofs of its divine authority?

If we next consider some of the arguments on which christianity rests, we shall have further proof of the sentiment we wish to establish. Why do we believe christianity to be divine? We answer, because we see it to be worthy of God; because it bears the impress of his wisdom, rectitude, and goodness; because it breathes a spirit so excellent and pure. Now if this language be just, if christianity claim belief on the grounds here stated, then it follows, that this religion would forfeit its claim and be unworthy our reception, were its doctrines clearly to appear, after the best use of our powers, repugnant to the divine perfections, or to any clear principles of truth or duty.

Is it said, that we are too ignorant to judge in any case of the inconsistency of doctrines with the character of God? Let us imagine a christian, who holds this sentiment, disputing with a Ma-

hometan—The latter asks him for his objections to the Koran. —He answers, your Koran is full of incongruities; it is often at war with the perfections of God. The indignant Mahometan replies, ‘Presumptuous man! dost thou, a child of yesterday, presume to fathom the wisdom of the Infinite, or to pronounce on this or another doctrine, that it is inconsistent with those attributes which thou canst not comprehend?’ I see not how this reply is to be evaded, if the principle assumed by the christian be correct.

I have thus endeavoured to shew, that the exercise of reason is the proper and appointed method of attaining to a belief of the heavenly origin of christianity. I now proceed to show that, from the manner in which christianity is communicated, we must continually employ upon it our reasoning powers, if we would acquire an accurate knowledge of the instructions which it offers. Christianity is not conveyed to us in language so precise that it cannot be misunderstood. The true meaning does not always glare upon us, so that it *must* be seen unless we obstinately shut our eyes; but great care is often necessary to discover it. Christianity is not handed down to us in a regular and systematic form, in a few connected propositions. It was conveyed by Jesus most frequently in familiar conversation, which grew out of the circumstances in which he was placed. It was often conveyed by the apostles, in epistles or letters adapted to the condition of individuals or churches. And these

conversations and letters have been transmitted to us in a language, which is no longer spoken. Must they not of necessity be attended with obscurity? Nothing is less formal and precise, than the manner in which christian truths are communicated. They are expressed, now in bold and glowing figures; now in short and pointed proverbs, familiar at the time, but no longer in use; now in allusions to customs, the traces of which can hardly be discerned. Need I tell you, that such writings, as have now been described, require the exercise of reason, to determine their import, to separate what is local from what is of universal application, and to assign the proper limits to every expression? Sometimes a variety of interpretations will offer themselves, and we must select one from the number. But how is this selection to be made? The only answer is, we must employ our reason; we must inquire which interpretation agrees best with the views of the writer, with other portions of scripture, with the divine perfections, with experience and common sense; and we must not hesitate to reject an interpretation which is inconsistent with these, although it may be suggested by the literal and most obvious sense of the words. Without this exercise of our reasoning powers, we shall continually pervert the scriptures, lose the sense in the sound, and be led into a thousand absurdities.

From these remarks on the manner in which scripture is communicated, we learn the error of those, who say, that the

first and obvious meaning of scripture ought humbly to be received, and that to depart from this, because it may not suit our ideas of what is right and fit, is to bend the scriptures to our proud and carnal reason. But if it be pride to depart from the first and obvious meaning of scripture, where is the Christian on whom this crime is not to be charged? Hear what the sacred volume says. "If thy hand or foot offend thee, cut it off." "If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out." "If any man sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." "If any man hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple." Here are plain passages; but who is contented to receive them in their first and plainest sense? Where are the Christians, who present themselves to our notice, with only one eye and one hand, without garments, and without any natural affection? You should remark, that these passages are found among the practical parts of scripture, where as much precision is certainly to be expected, as in the statement of doctrines; and yet, what christian does not feel himself bound to explain these passages with a certain latitude? Who does not see, that reason and common sense are as necessary guides in the interpretation of scripture, as of any other volume?

Many of the remarks just made will apply with equal force to those, who say, that God is an incomprehensible being, and that we are therefore not to reject a doctrine, because it interferes with our conceptions of his character. Suppose that I take with

me this principle, and open my Bible? I very soon read that God repents, and now that he is furious, and now that he has hands and feet—I ask the Christians, who have told me that I am incapable of judging of what is repugnant to the divine perfections, whether I must understand these literally? They answer with one voice, No. God is immutable and spiritual, and these passages are therefore to be taken in a figurative sense. Were I disposed, might I not borrow their own language, and say, 'Presumptuous men! dare *you* pronounce on the perfections of God? Because your feeble reason cannot reconcile repenting, fury, and hands and feet to the attributes of God, will you rashly affirm that they cannot be reconciled? These attributes are incomprehensible, and may therefore be consistent with what appears most opposite to them in the judgment of erring man.'

It is hoped that these remarks will show, that christianity requires no renunciation of reason. To be christians, we need not cease to be rational. There is no such hostility as many seem to represent, between reason and revelation. Revelation addresses its proofs and instructions to reason. Both are God's gifts, both are beams from the same source of light, both are consistent, and both designed to conduct us to perfection and immortality. Let it be remembered, that I am speaking of reason, when exercised with seriousness, deliberation, and impartiality. Will any say, that this deserves no respect, no confidence? What then becomes of the great doctrines of God's existence and of

the truth of Christianity? These are conclusions of reason, and must stand or fall with the faculties, by which their evidence is discerned.

I am sensible that those, who hold the language, which we have endeavoured to combat, sincerely think that they honor God, when they receive interpretations of scripture opposed to reason; for this, they say, is to exalt divine wisdom above their own. But to me it appears, that we honor God more, when we employ our best faculties on his word, with patient and serious attention, and seek to derive from it the most consistent, harmonious, and exalted views of his character and will. How do we discover our regard to the honor of a respected friend? By slowly admitting any thing, which throws a shade on his excellence, and by seeking and joyfully receiving those explanations of his language and conduct, which consist with the high character we ascribe to him. A regard for God's glory will make us anxious to place him before our own and others' minds in the most venerable and attractive light, and will lead us to distrust any interpretations of scripture, which carry in them a repugnancy to any of his attributes.

Let me conclude these remarks with observing, that the honor and influence of christianity are connected with the refutation of the error, that this religion is at war with reason. This opinion has often exposed its truth to suspicion; and what is worse, it has prepared many christians to admit gross absurdities, as doctrines of revelation. Their minds have indeed revolted against the sentiments imposed upon them; but they have been silenced by the reflection, that their understandings are infinitely incompetent to judge of God and his operations. They have been addressed, as if the merit of belief were exactly proportioned to the incredibility of the doctrines proposed. To this principle we owe the extension of many errors, which have tarnished the lustre of christianity, and exposed it to contempt. We ought to feel that christianity will be suspected and disregarded, just in proportion as scripture is interpreted in a manner, which shocks the clear and established principles of reason and conscience; and that one important method of recommending this religion is, to show that it is a consistent and "reasonable service."

(To be continued.)

HERESY, AS IT HAS BEEN UNDERSTOOD.

WHEN Latimer (afterwards bishop of Worcester,) had obtained great celebrity by his zeal and efforts against the errors of popery, Dr. Buckingham, prior of Black Friars, endeavoured from the pulpit to expose the dangerous tendency of his opinions; and particularly inveighed against his heretical notion, of having the scriptures translated into English. "If that heresy," said he, "were to prevail, we should soon see an end of every thing useful among us. The plowman, reading, that 'if he put his hand to the plow, and should happen to look back, he was unfit for the kingdom of God,' would soon lay aside his labor. The baker likewise, reading, that 'a little leaven will corrupt his lump,'

would give us very insipid bread. The simple man also, finding himself commanded 'to pluck out his eyes,' in a few years we should have the nation full of blind beggars." BRITISH PLUTARCH, vol. i. p. 93.

EXTRACTS EXPRESSIVE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

"THE more opposition we meet with in these labors, the more honorable it will be to us, provided we meet that opposition with the true spirit of christianity. And to assist us in this, we should frequently reflect, that many of our opponents are probably men, who wish as well to the gospel, as we do ourselves, and really think *they do God service* by opposing us. Even prejudice and bigotry, arising from such a principle, are respectable things, and entitled to the greatest candor. If our religion teaches us to *love our enemies*, certainly we should love, and, from a principle of love, should

endeavour to convince those, who, if they were only better informed, would embrace us as friends.

"The time will come, when the cloud, which for the present prevents our distinguishing our friends and our foes, will be dispersed, even that day in which *the secrets of all hearts will be disclosed* to the view of all. In the mean time, let us think as favorably as possible of all men; our particular opponents not excepted; and therefore be careful to conduct all *hostility*, with the pleasing prospect that one day it will give place to the most perfect *amity*."

INSTRUCTIVE ANECDOTES.

ANACHARSIS the philosopher was a Seythian by birth, and was reproached by a haughty Athenian on account of his country. The philosopher replied—"My country, you think, is no great honor to me; and you, Sir, in my opinion, are no great honor to your country."

In a conversation with Solon, Anacharsis compared *laws* to *cobwebs*, which only entangle little flies, while wasps and hornets break through them.

PERIANDER invited the wise men of Greece to visit him at Corinth. While at table, one of the company proposed this question:—Which is the most perfect popular government? The sev-

eral philosophers answered as follows:—

Solon. "That, where an injury, done to any private person, is such to the whole body."

Bias. "That, where the law has no superior."

Thales. "That, where the inhabitants are neither too rich nor too poor."

Anacharsis. "That, where virtue is honored and vice detested."

Pittacus. "That, where dignities are always conferred on the virtuous, and never upon the wicked."

Cleobulus. "That, where the citizens fear blame more than punishment."

Chilo. "That, where the laws are more regarded and have more authority than the orators."

POETRY.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

SWEET is the scene when virtue dies,
When sinks a righteous soul to rest;
How mildly beam the closing eyes!
How gently heaves the expiring
breast!

So fades a summer-cloud away;
So sinks the gale when storms are
o'er;
So gently shuts the eye of day;
So dies the wave along the shore.

Triumphant, smiles the victor brow;
Fanned by some angel's purple
wing;
Oh grave, where is thy victory now?
Invidious death, where is thy sting?

A holy quiet reigns around;
A calm which nothing can destroy;
Nought can disturb that peace pro-
found,
Which their unfettered souls enjoy.

Farewell, conflicting hopes and fears,
Where lights and shades alternate
dwell,
How bright the unchanging morn ap-
pears,
Farewell, inconstant world, farewell!

Its duty done, as sinks the clay,
Light, from its load, the spirit flies;
While heaven and earth combine to say
"Sweet is the scene when virtue
dies." ANON.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

NAPOLEON AND POPE.

Paris, Jan. 28, 1813.

ON the 19th, the Emperor vis-
ited Fontainebleau. He immedi-
ately repaired to the apartments
of the Pope, and held a conver-
sation of nearly two hours with
the Holy Father. The next day
his Holiness, accompanied by the
Cardinals Bayonne, Daira, and
Kuffo, the Archbishop of Tarro,
and several Bishops, returned the
visit to the Emperor, who receiv-
ed him in his great apartments.
His Holiness then visited the
Empress, who shortly after re-
turned the visit of the Pope. On
the 25th, after repeated confer-
ences, his Majesty and the Holy
Father signed the Concordat,
which has terminated all the dif-
ferences which have arisen re-
specting the affairs of the church.
The act was signed in the pres-
ence of the Cardinals and Pre-
lates.

CONCORDAT.

His Majesty, the Emperor and
King, and his Holiness, desirous
to terminate the differences which
have existed between them, and
to remove the difficulties which
have arisen in several affairs of
the church, have agreed to the
following articles, to serve as the
basis of a definitive arrangement.

Art. 1. His Holiness shall ex-
ercise the Pontificate in France
and in the kingdom of Italy, in
the same manner, and with the
same forms as his predecessors.

2. The ambassadors, minis-
ters, charge d'affairs of powers
near the Holy Father, and the
ambassadors, ministers, or charge
d'affairs of the Pope with foreign
powers, shall enjoy the immuni-
ties and privileges which are en-
joyed by other members of the
Corps Diplomatique.

3. The dominions which were

possessed by the Holy Father, and which have not been alienated, shall be exempt from every species of impost; and shall be administered by his agents or charge d'affairs. Those which have been alienated shall be restored, paying a composition of two millions of franks revenue.

4. Within six months, following the usual notification of the nomination by the Emperor, of the archbishops and bishops of the empire and of the kingdom of Italy, the Pope shall ordain them, agreeably to the *Concordats*, and in virtue of the present *indult*. Previous information of which shall be given by the Metropolitan Archbishop. If at the expiration of six months, the Pope shall not have given the ordination, the Metropolitan shall proceed to the ordination of the bishop named, in the usual manner.

5. The Pope shall nominate, in France or in Italy, to ten bishoprics, as shall ultimately be agreed upon in concert.

6. The six *suburbicaire* bishoprics are re-established: They shall be nominated by the Pope. Their remaining effects shall be restored; and they shall take measures respecting those which have been sold. On the death of the bishops of d'Anague & Rieti, their dioceses shall be united to the six bishoprics, agreeably to an agreement between his Majesty and the Holy Father.

7. In regard to the bishops of the Roman states, absent from their dioceses from circumstances, the Holy Father shall exercise in their favor the privilege he has a right to bestow on bishops *in partibus*. He shall bestow on them salaries equal to those which they have formerly enjoyed, and they shall be nominated to places, as they become vacant in the empire or in the kingdom of Italy.

8. His Majesty and his Holiness shall concert measures at a suitable time, for the reduction to be made, if necessary, in the bishoprics in Tuscany and the Genoese countries, as also for the bishoprics to be established in Holland and the Hanseatic departments.

9. The *Propagande* and *Penitencerie*, and the Archives shall be established in the place where the Holy Father shall sojourn.

10. His Majesty grants a free pardon to all the cardinals, bishops, priests, *laics*, who have incurred censure in consequence of events.

11. The Holy Father agrees to the foregoing dispositions in consequence of the existing state of the church; and in the confidence which his Majesty inspires in him, that he will give powerful protection to the numerous wants of religion in the times in which we live. **NAPOLÉON, PIUS VII.**

Fontainebleau, Jan. 25, 1813.

LETTER FROM INDIA.

[It is with great pleasure that we offer to our readers the following letter from Dr. Marshman, a missionary in India, to Samuel Salisbury Esq. of Boston, acknowledging the re-

ceipt of the money, which was subscribed about a year ago for the translation of the scriptures into the languages of India.]

Serampore, Oct. 20, 1812.

"DEAR SIR,

"BY our brethren, Mr Johns and Mr. Lawson, we have been favored with the fruits of the regard which our American friends bear to the sacred scriptures—the sum of 4640 dollars. So large a sum subscribed for the word of God, almost wholly by two towns, Boston and Salem, fills us with equal gratitude and surprise. Nor can we pass by unnoticed your personal exertions in this almost unprecedented effort of christian liberality, which you so much forwarded, both by your own liberal contribution, and, what was still more important to us, by your voluntary services in rendering the generous efforts of others efficient, through their confidence in your diligence and integrity in conveying the whole to us. We intreat you to add another favor to those for which we are already indebted to you, by conveying to our worthy friends with you, in any way you judge best, the deep sense we have of this their labor of love to the Sacred Word, and to the souls of the heathens, who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, for want of the light thereof;—and to acquaint them with a fact, which it would be

unjust to withhold from their knowledge, that by this exertion of Christian liberality *two towns* have sowed the word of life for a *whole nation*: this sum being fully sufficient to defray the expenses of translating and printing a first edition of the New Testament in almost any one of the dialects of India; so that the fruit of their christian love may, through the Divine blessing, (which we intreat them constantly to implore thereon) spring up from age to age in the country thus enlightened even to the day of Jesus Christ. Glorious thought! yet nothing less will be the fruit of this one effort of christian liberality, (perhaps begun and ended in a month,) if it be wisely and faithfully applied, which it shall be ours to do to the utmost of our ability. We inclose the last statement of the Translations in our hands, which you are welcome to communicate to the gentlemen to whom we feel so much indebted, in any way you like.

With our warmest thanks to them and to you, I remain, dear Sir, (for my brethren) your obliged friend and servant in our common Lord,

JOSH. MARSHMAN,

Deacon Salisbury, Boston.

Editorial Notice.

THE Editors of this work will gratefully receive communications adapted to its design, and free from expense. They wish their correspondents to keep distinctly in view the object of the work, and the pledge which has already been given, that it shall be conducted on the principles of christian candor and charity. As it is their wish not to wound the feelings of pious readers of any sect, so it is their design to treat with becoming respect, all their correspondents. It will be their aim to decide impartially on the comparative merits of such pieces, as shall be kindly communicated; yet, considering how few pages they have to fill in each number, and the numerous sources of supply, they anticipate some difficulty in making their selections, so as to give universal satisfaction. It is probable that many pieces, which will deserve a place in the work, must be deferred for a considerable time, and some finally excluded, for want of room. It is therefore hoped, that such occurrences will give no offence. To preclude as much as possible every occasion of displeasure, the Editors now give notice, that they shall not adopt the practice of publicly giving reasons, for declining to insert any communications which may be sent to them. If any writer shall be dissatisfied by the delay of publishing any thing of his, he may expect his manuscript to be returned to him, at his request, without any public marks of disapprobation. Short pieces, well written, will be most pleasing, and most sure to find a place in the Christian Disciple.